



U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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News Advisory

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Constitution Subcommittee Oversight Hearing Thursday on Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act

What: Oversight hearing entitled, “An Examination of the Scope and Criteria for Coverage Under the Special Provisions of the Voting Rights Act”
Who: Subcommittee on the Constitution – Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio), Chairman
When: 10:00 a.m., Thursday, October 20, 2005
Where: 2141 Rayburn Building

On August 6, 2007, six provisions of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) will expire, including Section 4. Section 4 sets forth a formula by which certain states and political subdivisions are specifically prohibited from administering literacy tests as a prerequisite to voting, including the administration of English-only tests, and are automatically brought under the obligations set forth in Sections 5, 6, and 8 of the VRA.

BACKGROUND...

- ✓ Prior to the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, and 1964 and the VRA in 1965, one of the primary methods for keeping minorities from participating in the election process was the administration of literacy tests. While the requirements seemed neutral, they were applied in a discriminatory manner.
- ✓ Through Section 4, Congress targeted those states and political subdivisions with a history of discriminating against minority citizens and prohibited them from using literacy tests and other devices to deny citizens the right to vote.
- ✓ Congress has temporarily extended Section 4 three separate times after determining that discrimination continued to exist. It is on these findings that the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of Section 4 and the provisions it triggers.

THIS HEARING WILL...

- ⇒ Examine the scope and criteria for coverage under VRA including the bailout process in Section 4.

WITNESSES: Hon. Michael Steele, Maryland Lt. Gov.; Mr. Armand Derfner, Voting Rights Attorney; Mr. Gerry Herbert, former Department of Justice attorney; and Mr. Jose Garza, Voting Rights Counsel, League of the United Latin American Citizens.

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